

Ymchwiliad ôl-ddeddfwriaethol i Ddeddf Trais yn erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol (Cymru) 2015

Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women,

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Ymateb gan: Barnardos Cymru

Response from: Barnardos Cymru



1. Information and working context of Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, family support for children affected by parental imprisonment, domestic abuse and parental substance misuse, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation and young people's substance misuse services.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but we always strive to secure better outcomes for more children. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

- **This response may be made public.**
- **This response is on behalf of Barnardo's Cymru.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. We are a major third sector provider of support services to vulnerable children, young people and their families across Wales. We are directly commissioned to support families on the basis of domestic abuse in two local authorities; however an internal audit suggests that at least two thirds of the services we provide deal with domestic violence issues on a regular basis as part of their work to support families.
- 1.2 We recognise that children and young people exposed to parental conflict, domestic abuse and violence experience trauma and we have invested in the pilot of an evidenced and innovative assessment and intervention model with Professor Gordon Harold so that we can support better well-being outcomes to children and their families.
- 1.3 We also provide specialist services to children and young people at risk of or abused through child sexual exploitation; with sexually harmful behaviour or who are the victims of child sexual abuse. On this basis we lobbied during the passing of the Act for a stronger education and prevention offer and stronger provisions to meet the support needs of children affected by trauma through exposure to domestic violence or as the victims of abuse.

2. Response on improvements in response as a result of obligations under the Act; better responses from public authorities and capturing the views and experiences of survivors.

- 2.1 We believe that is too early to say with any certainty that the Act is having a significant impact on levels of response, support or on opportunities for survivors to express their views. This should also be seen in the context of pressures on public spending and the introduction of new requirements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act at the same time as new obligations under the (VAWDASV) Act have been introduced. We have not been aware of any additional resources for services directed at supporting survivors and their children.
- 2.2. However we do believe that public authorities are giving the obligations of the Act the deserved attention and priority. We are involved in local and regional planning and development processes in some areas and we are confident that these address the policy intent of the Act. However it is too early and perhaps unreasonable to comment on any implementation gap.
- 2.3. As an organisation we already had internal processes in place to inform and support robust responses to the issues covered by the

Act. However the Act provided the impetus for an event for all managers from across Wales to consider the new obligations, workforce implications and further promotion of the principles of the Act through our policies and practice. The National Advisor attended the event and spoke to our staff body about the Ask and Act Duty and her expectations of the workforce and of organisations such as ours. The implementation of the legislation is also a standing item on the agenda of our Equality and Diversity Board. In this way the Act has provided a clear focus on the issues for social care professionals and practitioners.

3. National Advisor

- 3.1. The National Advisor has engaged with us in relation to our role as a provider of services to children, young people and families affected by the issues which the Act seeks to address. There is an on-going and useful dialogue with meetings in place and requests from the National Advisor for updates on our progress in further developing evidenced practice in these areas. As stated above the National Advisor has also addressed our managers and set out her expectations of them.
- 3.2. We do not feel that the current National Advisor's position is compromised and we are confident that she would provide appropriate challenge to Welsh Government and other relevant parties where necessary. We know that the National Advisor is also working closely with the Future Generations Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner to support a joined up approach to implementation of the Act. However we believe that it would be beneficial for the National Advisor to be given greater powers and to be appropriately resourced.

4. Good practice guide to healthy relationships

- 4.1. We are aware of the good practice guide and were engaged in the process of development of the guide in a limited way. We cannot evidence the impact (or not) of the guide on the development of whole school approaches to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence at this time.
- 4.2. Our experience is that the issues are taken seriously by Education Safeguarding Leads at the local authority level and that they are fully engaged in the agenda, however there are still some schools that fully embrace the need to tackle these issues and others that do not.
- 4.3. We were commissioned by Welsh Government to develop a CSE Education Resource in 2015 which is available free to schools and to deliver implementation training across Wales earlier this year. We have also met with officials taking forward the PSE curriculum as part of the current curriculum reform programme and we have

agreed to share any free resources we have available to support teachers via the Welsh Government approach moving forward.

- 4.4. However we remain concerned that some schools will not fully embrace a whole school approach in the absence of any statutory requirement to do so. So that children and young people in some schools will enjoy such an approach and will have an education which supports keeping them safe and informed, while other children and young people will receive a minimum education on understanding the issues. We are also concerned about the need for the development of appropriate resources and guidance to support the education of children and young people with additional learning needs.